North & West Region CACP/EACH/ACAS Network

Response to Productivity Commission's Draft Report and Recommendations

'Caring for Older Australians'

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 6.1

The Network supports the removing of regulatory restrictions to the number of community care packages and residential bed licences, as this may result in people's needs being met in a timely manner. We also support the removal of a distinction between high and low places, and allowing ALL registered providers to deliver different levels of packages eg. Community Aged Care Packages, Extended Aged Care at Home (EACH) and EACH Dementia. This would result in an increased continuity of care for clients and carers.

However, allocating packages to individual clients and not providing organisations with any (or minimum) block funding may reduce organisations' capacity building and planning in such areas:

- Workforce development
- Infrastructure resources
- Areas of speciality, for example, dementia care
- Research

Furthermore, it may restrict the development of innovative programs as it would be more problematic to use pooled packaged care funding for more creative projects such as the trial of alternative therapies, for example, Music and Art Therapies.

CONSIDERATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS
All approved providers receive a confirmed minimum amount of confirmed block funding to enable organisational capacity building.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 6.2

The network supports the concept of client co-contributions to their care needs according to affordability, and welcomes a consistent approach to the fee structure across providers Australia wide. We welcome and support the move away from a charity model to a consumer directed model of care.

Considerations & Recommendations:
Introduction of a 'safety net' approach for clients who are unable to pay such as homeless clients, and clients whose pensions are totally consumed by rent.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 6.3

Considerations & Recommendations:
We support the introduction of a lifetime stop-loss limit and increased pricing transparency.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.1

The network supports the principles underlying an Australian Seniors Gateway Agency (ASGA). In particular, we agree that there is a need for a system that is easy to navigate for all clients and carers, but especially for NESB and disadvantaged groups. However, the network is raising a number of issues encountered by its ACAS and package care provider members.

CONSIDERATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Information

1. Staff providing information need to be well equipped and skilled to handle a wide range of calls, and be able to ascertain the information needs of clients and carers, as clients and carers often do not know where to start and what information they need. Furthermore, staff members need to have highly developed communication skills in order to convey knowledge and information in a way that a client will understand, for example:
   - Community languages
   - Easy English
   - Large print
   - Use of interpreters

2. A challenge associated with the provision of useful and timely information is having a well resourced database that is easy to navigate and update. Maintaining an up to date database is resource intensive, yet critical for high quality information provision.

Assessment

1. ASGA need to be locally based and accessible to people. Telephone assessment is a poor substitute for assessments conducted in a client's home. Home based assessments provide greater insight (in a shorter period of time) of the real circumstances of a person's abilities and living situations.

2. Professionally qualified assessment staff are best placed to undertake both broad and in-depth assessment, and collect information not necessarily articulated by the carer and client. Professional assessment staff have skills in:
   - Understanding and managing the trajectory of diseases
   - Interviewing, observational and rapport building for gaining maximum relevant information within time constraints
   - Undertaking broad, holistic and comprehensive assessment
   - Identifying and monitoring ongoing care needs.

3. Carers need to be assessed in their own right. There is a risk of the care recipients' needs being prioritised over those of the carers.

4. Remuneration of assessment staff needs to be matched with skills, experience and parity with industry standards and awards.

5. There needs to be clarification and further consideration given to role of ASGA in care coordination and review, and the future role and positioning case management services within the new proposed aged care system.

Care Coordination and Case Management

1. While the Network strongly supports the notion of clients independently navigating the service system and accessing services, there are groups of people and their carers who require someone to advocate on their behalf, assist them to identify the most suitable provider, and support them in assessing and coordinating services. People who may lie in this category include NESB clients, homeless clients, clients with mental illness and dementia.

2. People often access services when they are at a crisis point, during which time clients and carers are highly stressed and therefore unable to navigate appropriate services.

3. The role of case management is a specialist service in its own right. Consideration should be given to current case management models and new models explored. For example, initial intensive case management support with a reduced level of support once the client's situation is stable. Other clients may not require any support during periods of stability.

4. Effective case management promotes client wellbeing for longer periods and reduces hospital presentations and premature admission into residential care.

5. The relationship between the client and Case Manager is paramount for ongoing trust that leads to acceptance of preventative intervention and reduces the progression of functional decline. This is crucial for clients who have difficulty in engaging with other, may be isolated, have limited social supports, have mental illness, dementia or are from a NESB background.

PROVIDER OF CHOICE

There is the risk that in attempting to provide consumer choice, clients and carers become overwhelmed with information.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.4

The network supports this recommendation particularly concerning special needs groups. It is a concern that moving to a consumer driven market may see providers who caters for special needs group may not service a large enough market to become a viable provider without additional block funding. Nevertheless, these providers meet a special need in our community for disenfranchised, ATSI clients, smaller ethnic groups and homeless people.